

THE DIVIDED HEART

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A SERMON

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"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty."

Hosea 10:2

THIS was originally spoken of the Kingdom of Israel. For many years they had been under a king who commanded the worship of Baal and persecuted the worshippers of JEHOVAH. God chastened the people very sorely for this, but He did not utterly destroy them. At last Hoshea, the king, came to the throne. He was the last king of Israel, and it is very remarkable that it is said of him that he was much better than those that went before him. He did not evil in the sight of the Lord after the manner of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He was not what could be wished, but still he was not like the rest, and it seems very odd to a person who reads it casually that God should spare the nation under worse kings, and then should carry it away into captivity, when they had for once in a while a far better king.

But the matter is explained thus. Hoshea withdrew the curse of persecution from the people, and they were left free to follow JEHOVAH. While they were persecuted—compelled to worship Baal, God, as it were, had compassion upon them. He abhorred their idolatry, but still His anger did not burn against them to the same degree as it did afterwards when they were left to do as they pleased, religious persecution was withdrawn, and the pressure was taken off.

Then, when there began to be internal discussion and strife, and some went after the true God, but others still followed the old idol, then it was that God saw that the nation was incurable. They were altogether set upon evil, and He said, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," or it might be read, "Now shall they be condemned." From which I gather that a sin in a certain case may be overlooked for a while, and that the same sin under another circumstance may be speedily punished. God knows the circumstances of temptation in which a man may be placed, and though the force of temptation is not an excuse for sin, it may serve as a mitigation of it.

A person under a tyrannizing power who is driven to sin by fear may be far less guilty than another who is under no such constraint, but who willfully, of his own heart, chooses the evil, and God may bear a long time with the same sin in one man under certain circumstances, which in another under different circumstances shall provoke Him at once to anger, and He shall sweep off the man from the face of the earth. Beware, dear hearers, of deliberate sin. Beware of the sin which is of your own choosing. I may say, beware of all sin, for in a measure it is deliberate, and of your own choosing, but especially that sin which is not brought upon you by any pressure, but simply by your own willful disobedience to God. This is a crying sin, and one which God will not long put up with.

And now I shall take the language of the text and apply it in other ways. "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty."

I. THIS MAY BE TRUE OF ANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

It has long been my joy, beloved in the Lord, that *our* heart has not been divided. We have walked together these many years in holy fellowship, and imperfect as we are, yet there have not been divisions among us. There has been no division about doctrine. We have agreed upon the great truths of God.

There has been, I believe, no division about who shall be the greatest. We have been content each one to occupy his place in the church, and to work on. It is not our goodness that has made it so, it is only the power of God's Spirit which has kept us, who otherwise might readily have been sundered—

kept us as the heart of one man in sacred unity. Oh! let it always be so—let it always be so! May these eyes be closed in the darkness of death long before I shall see you contending the one against the other.

If it should ever happen that I should be unfit to go in and out among you to your edification, may I be laid aside, and some other found round whom you may rally as one man, that by any means and every means the church may be kept in its integrity—one in heart—a threefold cord which cannot be broken. Let each man endeavor to avoid giving offense to his brother. Let us all be members unto edification of the same one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

May the same Spirit abide in us, and work with us to God's glory, for we well know that a divided church is found faulty. It is faulty so far as anything like usefulness is concerned. The strength that is spent in division is so much taken away from service. When the children of God use their swords against one another, they are not using them against the adversaries of the Lord. May our strength never be spent in division. A house divided against itself must come to naught, but strong in the unity which God shall give us may we not be found faulty! I will not dwell upon that, however, but remark that the text—

II. MAY BE USED AGAIN OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN.

One-heartedness in a Christian is a great point. "Unite my heart to fear thy name" is a prayer which every Christian should always pray. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." A double-hearted Christian—what shall I say of him? He is like the eye which when it is single fills the body with light, but if it has lost its singleness, it causes the body to be darkness, and if the light that is in us is darkness, how great is that darkness! Though a Christian deep down in his soul cannot be divided in heart, but must love his God, yet there may be very much of division of pursuit, division of aim and objectives in Christian men.

And brethren and sisters, may I not suggest that it may be so with some of you, that your hearts may be divided, and therefore you are found faulty? Take the Christian man who desires to serve God, but still is equally desirous *to amass wealth*. Such a man—may God not put him into the scales and judge him, for I fear he will be found wanting, but if his desire for wealth be even subordinate to that of the glory of God only in a slight degree, he will never attain to any great eminence in the divine life. He cannot.

In proportion as his vital force is divided and drawn away from the main business of life, he will become spiritually lean, even if he becomes pecuniarily rich. He may be a millionaire in the world, but he will be a pauper in the church. He may be a "strong" man on the market, but he shall be a very dwarf in the house of God. There will sure to be a faultiness where the heart is so divided. The most charitable construction we can put upon it is that there are darker evils.

We have known Christians too, whose object in life has been *the large acquiring of knowledge*, the pursuit of science, the gathering up of information. This, like the pursuit of wealth, is lawful enough in its subordinate place, but when it comes into rivalry with the seeking of the glory of God, the man may become a scholar, but he will never become a beloved disciple that leans his head upon Jesu's bosom. He may be great in the classics, and he may be a master in the sciences, but he will never be a master in Israel. The division of his vital powers, the want of concentration, will be sure to keep him in the rear ranks of the church of God—if he is kept there.

Oh! what a blessed thing it is to see a wholehearted Christian man, who, while he pursues his present business, still pursues it for God's glory, while he studies and stores his mind, is doing it for one objective, namely, that he may be thereby more useful to the church of God, and more helpful in the winning of souls. Give the man but one heart, one objective, and he *is* a man. Someone has said that he dreaded the man of one book, and so the wicked world may dread the man of one objective if that one objective is the glory of God.

They that have two targets to shoot at shall not strike either, they miss their aim, but he who lives only for God with all his might, is like a thunderbolt launched from JEHOVAH'S hand that goes crash through every difficulty, and reaches the point God aims at, and that the man himself seeks. He shall live for something, he shall tell upon his age, he shall leave his mark. The man with an undivided heart—he

shall not be found faulty, but he that is this and that—a follower of Christ, but yet something over and above that, almost equally as much the other as he is a Christian—he shall be a poor, poor thing, he shall not enjoy the light of fellowship with God, he shall not walk in nearness to Christ. He shall be saved, but “so as by fire.” No “abundant entrance” shall be administered to him into the kingdom of God, our Father.

I believe, dear friends, and I will go a step further using the same words, that this case, if it should happen to be that of *a minister with a divided heart*, is more sad than it is in the case of the common Christian. Dear brethren, those of us who believe that we are called to be ministers for Christ are, above all the rest of the church, bound to devote ourselves to one thing. “This one thing I do.” If other men have two things to do, we by our call and office, if we are not liars in professing to be of God, and traitors to our office, are bound to do but one thing, and that is to free ourselves from the blood of all men, that we may stand before God as His honest servants. You may depend upon it that a minister with his heart at all divided will make a failure of his ministry. It must be so.

I have watched the career of a good many young men, though not old, myself, and I remember one with remarkable abilities, and in his preaching, there was a good clear sound of the Gospel. But I, who was as a father to him, noted that he had an ambitious desire to be distinguished as a speaker. I saw that, even when he sought to win souls, it was with a view that persons might say how earnest he was. I could not help detecting in his conversation that there was an evident objective to make himself somewhat, that he might be great in Israel.

And I remember well how I walked with him and warned him that if God’s servant did anything whatever for himself, God would not use him for His divine purposes, that if we sacrificed to our pride, God would not let us stand as priests at His altar, that if we would be honored, we must stay down, stay humble, that God would not long bless a man who was self-seeking, even in the ministry of Christ.

The warnings he received very kindly, but they never sank into his heart, and I can see him now! He is not here, but were he here I think he would confess the truth of what I say. He lies a miserable wreck upon the shore, and he has fallen by his ambition! Else had it not been for that, I would have conceived for him a high and excellent career.

And I would say to every minister, “I charge you fling away your ambition. Your only ambition must be to be nothing, to be hated, scouted, called a fool, a driveller, if by any means you may win souls for Christ, but to cultivate rhetoric, to be an orator, to study that you may be thought to be a profound thinker, to labor earnestly with this idea that you may be esteemed to be a first-class soul-winner—even that is bad. The only thing is to seek to do what God would have you do and to glorify Him, to lay every honor at His feet and live for Him, for any sort of division in the Christian minister’s pursuit may make him faulty.”

I believe that the man who gives himself to be a preacher should divest himself of the cares of this life, as the soldier does in the army, that he may be able to give his whole soul and life to the one matter for which his Lord has called him. It will be good for him to do this, and then he had better leave politics alone. He had better leave everything alone but his one work. We have not mind enough for two things, and our work is such that if we had mind enough for twenty things it would be best to consecrate it all to that one thing.

If I may snatch firebrands from the flame, who will, may fill your Senate and may guide the policies of Cabinets, if I may lead sinners to the cross of Christ, and tell them of life in His dear wounds, I should be content, though I should never influence anything besides except the hearts of men to the Savior. One thing, young man, if you are about to be a minister—one thing, my brother, however old thou mayest be, permit me to say to thee and myself tonight—one thing we must do if we would not be found faulty.

But the stress of my text I intend to lay tonight upon one particular case and that is—

III. THE SEEKING SINNER.

There are some persons who are awakened and are seeking salvation, but they are not likely to find it because their heart is divided, and they will be found faulty. Very briefly, and very briefly indeed, I mean to speak upon this disease, upon the evil of it, and suggest a few thoughts by way of a cure for it.

Of this disease, let me say that *it is a disease in the heart*. Now a very small prick in the heart will kill. A great gash in the head may be healed, but a slight wound in the heart is deadly. A division of understanding or of judgment may be remedied, but a division of heart is a very terrible and often a very fatal disease. Let me show you how, and in what respects, some seeking souls are divided in heart.

And they are, first, *divided as to a sense of their condition*. At one time they think they are in great danger, tomorrow they don't know that there is anything very particular. When they have read a passage of Scripture, they believe their heart to be evil, but they forget the text, and they think their heart is, after all, not so bad as Scripture says it is. They hear that there is a wrath to come, and they are alarmed, but they get away to their friends and neighbors and say, "Why was I so foolish as to be frightened by the preacher?"

They are in danger, they dare not say they are not, but yet they almost hope it is not true. They know it is not all right with them, yet they try to cheat themselves with the idea that it is pretty nearly all right. They are never likely to seek a Savior while they are in this condition, for until a man's mind is thoroughly made up that he must be saved by Christ or perish he will never go to Christ. A divided heart about our personal condition before God is a deadly sign.

These same seekers are often divided *as to the objects of their choice*. They want salvation tonight, they would give their eyes to have it. They will get to their chamber and pray, "O God, save me!" They will endorse the language of that hymn—

*"Wealth and honor I disdain;
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain;
These can never satisfy;
Give me Christ, or else I die."*

Tomorrow they will forget all about Christ, and they will be seeking after something else. Tonight, they would have heaven, but tomorrow they would find a heaven on earth. Tonight, they would give up sin, but tomorrow they wish to have much of it. Tonight, they see the emptiness of earthly pleasure, but tomorrow they will suck it down as the ox drinks down water. Their heart is divided between this and that. They are not for the world quite, nor for Christ quite, they halt between two opinions. Oh! that God would decide them that their heart, their divided heart, may not prove their ruin.

Some seekers are divided *as to the object of their trust*. They trust in Jesus Christ, but they also trust a little in themselves. They believe His blood has a great deal to do with it, but they think their prayers have something too, and so they stand with one foot on the land and the other on the sea, and therefore, they fall. They are relying upon self in part and upon Christ in part, and so they will assuredly come to destruction, for Christ will never be part Savior. It must be all or nothing. He never entered into partnership with sinful worms to *help* save them, He is the sole Foundation, and other foundation can no man lay.

Alas! upon this matter, how many have their hearts divided! They are trusting to their baptism, or to their confirmation, or to their sacraments—all false foundations—and yet they are trying to trust in Christ at the same time. Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.

And this division is found *in their love*. They think they love divine things now, but by and by some earthly thing comes in and gets uppermost in their souls. Oh! I do remember myself when, if I woke in the morning, I took care always to have a godly book under my pillow, and an arousing book too—Doddridge's, "Rise and Progress," Alleine's, "Alarm," Bunyan's books, and the like—and yet at another time I forgot all about that. I was hot today and cold tomorrow. I would have been ready to die in order

to be saved at sometimes, would fain have escaped from the mercy of God, and permitted to “enjoy myself,” as I said in the things of the world.

Oh! it is a sad state to be in. A seeker will never get Christ until he *must* have Christ, and he will never get salvation until salvation is the first thing, the last thing, the middle thing with him—until it comes to this, “By God’s Spirit I *must* be saved. Nothing will content me. I must be saved, and until I am saved, I cannot give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids.” The Lord of His mercy give us a united heart about this, for a divided heart here is a guilty heart in the seeker.

Now let me speak upon—

IV. THE DANGER OF THIS DISEASE—the evil of it.

The evil of it is, first, that *seekers with divided hearts miss the blessing*. Ye shall find Him when ye seek Him with your whole heart—not till then. Mercy’s door opens to the knock of a whole-hearted knocker. A half-hearted seeker will have to wait many a day before that gate will ever give him entrance. No, soul, if thou dost not think enough of mercy to ask for it with all thy heart, thou wilt have to wait awhile. No, man, the choice mercies of God are too precious to be thrown away upon one who asks with a divided heart. Now look at heaven’s gate instead of here and there, instead of looking right and left. For thee one thing is needful, sinner—that one thing. Fifty things thou mayest leave to be sought by and by, but now for thee it is one thing, and if thou wilt not make it one thing, thou wilt miss it—miss it to thine eternal loss.

Again, remember that you who seek the Lord with a divided heart *condemn yourselves*. When you stand before the judgment seat you won’t be able to say, as some will, “Lord, we did not know of this salvation. Lord, we never were impressed with its value,” for the Lord would tell you, “Why, you trembled under a sermon, you knelt and prayed, and you cried to Me, though you lied with yours lips because your heart was not perfect before Me. Yet you did know the value of these things, and you did feel them too, in a measure, so that you are without excuse.”

He that follows the world with all his heart, and thinks that the best, is a reasonable man in following it, but he who thinks the world to come the best, and yet follows this present evil world—why, what a fool is he, and who shall plead for him? When he stands before God, his prayers will damn him, if nothing else will, for his prayers will be swift witnesses against him that he did know, did feel, and yet he would not act upon his knowledge, and he blotted out that which he perceived in his feeling. God save us from missing heaven and from condemning ourselves by seeking it with a divided heart.

Moreover, O man, I would press one fact upon thee very solemnly, and that is that a divided search after salvation is *an insult to the Savior*. Who is it, and what is it, O man, that thou dost set up in competition with Christ? All heaven and earth cannot produce His equal, and hast thou found something that can rival Him? What is it? Dare you say what it is? There have been men who have had good thoughts, but even a harlot’s love has been chosen by them, instead of Christ. There are others who have loved the wages of unrighteousness, and Sabbath-breaking has made them forego Christ. We have known others who, for fear of a little scandal from their worldly companions, have been ashamed to follow Christ, and they have given up Jesus Christ sooner than bear a fool’s derision.

O man, if thou hadst the choice made thee tonight of all the kingdoms of this world, or Christ, thou wouldest insult Christ if thou shouldst pause in the choice, for He is better than them all, and thy soul’s salvation is better than them all. “For what shall it profit a man, though he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

But I can weep for thee while I rebuke thee. What is it thou dost put in competition with Christ? What is it you prefer to Christ? Man, art thou mad that thou shouldst insult thy Savior, who poured out His heart’s blood for the salvation of such as thou art, and do thou think that anything can be worth the having at so dreadful a price as the loss of thy soul, and the loss of the Savior’s salvation? I beseech thee turn that over in thy mind. I cannot put it as forcibly as I would, but I pray thee let thy conscience help thee, and answer if it be right in thee to have a divided heart, and so to insult thy Savior.

Once more on this point, and that is, dost thou not know that a divided heart is *a continued disobedience to God*? He saith, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength,” and now thou hast sinned thy soul out of His favor and in danger of eternal death, and yet with only half a heart dost thou turn to Him. Thou puttest out one hand towards God, but with the other thou wouldest have thy sin. Thou wouldest fain go to heaven and take thy sins with thee. Thou wouldest be saved, but thou wantest to sit both at the table of the Lord and the table of Satan. Thou desirest to hold with the hare and run with the hounds—be the friend of the devil, and yet the friend of God.

O man, the very thought is rebellion against thy Maker. Cast it away from thee, and ask the Lord this night to bind all thine affections into one bundle, and then draw them all to Himself—that for thee the one thing may be to seek salvation through Christ, and reconciliation to the good Lord in heaven through the precious blood of His dear Son.

And now suffer the last few words which shall be meant to be—

V. A CURE FOR THIS DISEASE of a divided heart.

And the first word shall be this. Thou oughtest well to have done with a divided heart when *the matter in hand is thy salvation or damnation*. When a ship is floating gaily out at sea with favorable winds, men think but little of their safety. When she begins to rock and there is some danger, then their safety rises in importance, and they put it side by side with the safety of the gold they carry with them, but when the winds break loose and the storm is up, and the ship is about to go by the board, and the man must leap into the lifeboat, he flings his gold away, he leaves his treasures loose upon the floor. As they sink into the abyss, he gives up anything if he may but save his life. In that dread hour when the vessel is going down, and a handful of men alone are clinging to a mast, all is gone from them except the thought of saving life.

And surely it should be so with you. When you are saved you may begin to think of some other thing, but not tonight. For as the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there is but a step between some of you and death. Before another Sabbath day—I may speak positively, for out of so many as there are here some one of us will die this week, by all the probabilities of life and death—before another Sabbath day one of us will lie in the shell, prepared to be taken to the grave, and if that should happen to be an unconverted man, then before another Sabbath you will know of hell and of the lake of fire more than this Book can tell or these lips can utter, except ye be converted and fly to Christ.

Surely in such jeopardy your whole heart ought to be set upon the one matter—your own salvation—and I beseech you and I pray God the Spirit to make it so that you may now with your whole undivided faculties seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. By the awful peril of your soul, I do entreat you linger, and delay, and remain undecided no more, lest your heart, being divided, should prove faulty and be cast away forever.

Remember, again, and the argument is equally forcible, though it is more pleasing, *the mercy that you are seeking after is worth the concentration of all your thoughts* to find it. To be delivered from all your past sin—is not this worth the seeking? To be made a child of God—is not this worth wrestling for? To be secure of heaven, to be delivered from hell—is not this worth an attempt to obtain?

Oh! if it needed that you should go to your houses tonight, and neglect your tomorrow’s business—it does not need it, but if it did—if you went not to the market or to the Exchange by the week together, ay, and if your tables were deserted, and you snatched but a morsel that might sustain life, and if you took no walk, had no recreation, if you denied yourself anything and everything until you found Christ, I could not blame you. I am sure it would be well worth the while. Anything, everything should be neglected that you might become one of the people of God and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Did you know the joy that belongs to Christians, you would never be satisfied until you had it.

The man that saw the pearl of great price saw it in another dealer’s hands, and he thought, “I must have that, it is the finest pearl of all, so I must have that,” and he went his way, you know, and though he had many a dainty jewel, he sold all he had and turned it all to gold, and back he came to the trader, and

he gave with joy all that he had that he might buy that one pearl, and he made a good bargain too. And you would make a blessed bargain if everything were given up that you might find a Savior and be delivered from the wrath to come. Therefore, I do pray you to seek Him with your whole heart.

Once more, do remember that *the Savior gave His whole heart* when He came to save men. There was no by-play about Christ. His zeal for souls did eat Him up. He loved, He lived, He died to save them. Will you have a divided heart about that which took the Savior's whole soul? Remember the devil is in earnest to destroy you. He will leave no stone unturned to keep you his victim that he may utterly destroy you. Shall hell be in earnest to ruin you, and will you not be in earnest to escape from it? Remember, good men are in earnest.

I wish that I could speak to you with the tongue of an angel tonight. There is no faculty of my mind which I would not lay under a heavy mortgage if I might but bring your soul to Christ. I would willingly enough go to school again and sit at any master's feet if he could tell me how to deal with human hearts aright and stir them and draw them to the Savior.

Ah! 'tis poorly done, but it is with my whole soul I would plead with you to fly to Christ. And yet 'tis but little a concern of mine, compared with the way in which it is a concern of yours. If I have been faithful, I shall not be responsible for you, it is your soul that is at stake. Sirs, shall I be anxious about your souls, and will you not care about them? Do they seem precious to me, and trifles to you? Shall I urge you to escape and will you feel, "It does not signify, it is but a trifle"? Lord, deliver us from this insanity, for insanity it is for a man to trifle with his soul, when others are in earnest for him.

And God is in earnest. The great eternal God is in earnest. He says tonight to you, "Turn ye, turn ye! Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If salvation be child's play to you, it is not to Him. He gave His Son from His bosom to redeem men, and He sent His Spirit unto men to sanctify them. He puts out His omnipotence, lays His wisdom under tax to find a plan, and devise a way by which He might save mankind.

Oh! trifle not where God is so in earnest, lest you find Him terribly in earnest in the day when His incensed love shall turn to wrath. Jealousy—what is it but love set on a blaze? And if you so hate God that you will prefer to live in hell sooner than be indebted to His mercy, then rest assured you shall feel how heavy His arm can be.

*"What chains of vengeance shall they feel
Who slight the cords of love?
How they deserve the deepest hell
That scorn the joys above!"*

May God of His infinite mercy prevent anybody here from daring the wrath of God by following after Christ with a divided heart—trifling with his Maker, trifling with his soul, trifling with heaven, trifling with hell. May we be in earnest, each one of us, and may we all meet at the right hand of God through sovereign grace. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HOSEA 10:1-6

Verse 1. *Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself:*

Not to his God. It matters not how much fruit we bear—if it is for self, we are really fruitless. A thing which is good in itself may lose all its goodness because stained with a selfish motive. We are to live unto God, and we must always be watchful about this, otherwise we may be doing much, and doing nothing. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself."

1. *According to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.*

It is a very sad thing when the more men receive from God, the more they sin. But just in proportion as the land of Israel was fat and fertile, in that proportion did they set up altars unto false gods, and provoke the true God, who had given them these mercies. It is an ill thing when men grow rich and offer sacrifice to their own vanity—when men gather learning, and only use it to debate against the simple teachings of God—when just as God blesses, men cease to bless Him!

2. *Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty:*

A half heart is no heart at all, and when men seem to go after God, and at the same time to go after their idols, they are not going after God. Their religion is vain. The good side is but a pretense, the evil side is the real thing.

2. *He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.*

Let us take heed then, dear friends, that we make nothing into an idol. The shortest way to lose the dearest object of your affections is to make an idol of him. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.” Sometimes this is done in great mercy to God’s people, for there is no greater evil than for a heart to be happy in idolatry. Sometimes it is done in judgment upon the ungodly. They will not have the true God, and the false god shall be false to them. “He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.”

3. *For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?*

Their king was slain, but if he had lived, what would be the good of him without God? What is the good of any temporal blessing if God be not in it? It is the husk with the kernel gone, and if we are able to enjoy the husk, it looks as if we were swine, and swine are being fattened for the slaughter. What is the use of anything that we possess to us if God be divorced from it? I put the question again. If you are a true child of God, all the corn and wine in the world cannot feed you. Your bread must come from heaven.

4. *They have spoken words,—*

That which they spoke was not the truth. We cannot speak without words, but it is an evil thing when our speech is nothing but words. Words, words, words!—no heart, no truth. “They have spoken words.”

4. *Swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.*

God keep us from untruthfulness, and especially from a want of truth towards Himself. Do not you think that oftentimes, both in prayer and praise, it might be said, “They have spoken words—nothing more”? There has been a falsehood in the most solemn transaction towards God. Woe unto you, dear friends, if that should turn out to be the case. Ye may cheat your fellow men if ye have a heart for it, but you never will be able to cheat your God. He is not mocked. “They have spoken words,” says He.

5. *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven:*

Why, those calves are their trust. They rely upon those images of false gods—those images which they set up in the place of the true God. Pretending thereby to worship Him, they trusted in these, and now they shall become their fear. He who will have a confidence apart from God will find his confidence soured into a fear before long. Your greatest ground of distress will be that which was once the ground of your reliance apart from God.

5-6. *For the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb:*

The spiteful king.

6. *Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.*

These golden calves excited the desires of the king of Assyria and he took them away. These gods were baits to their enemies, instead of a basis for their confidence. They were carried away captive of the people with them—their god captive—their god melted down to make images, or to make money for the king of Assyria! Ah! what shame did God pour upon idolaters!

And what shame He will pour upon us if we have any confidence except the unseen God, and if we rely anywhere but upon the eternal covenant of His immutable grace. Oh! brothers and sisters, let us try to flee away from that which is so tempting to sense—confidence in an arm of flesh, and let our sole and alone trust be in Him that made the heavens and the earth, and in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.